



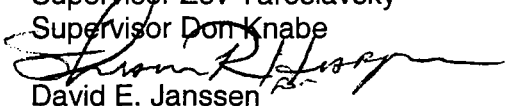
County of Los Angeles
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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DAVID E. JANSSEN
Chief Administrative Officer

October 30, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: 
David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
First District

YVONNE B. BURKE
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION REGARDING STATUS OF OVERALL NEW DIRECTIONS
TASK FORCE SERVICE INTEGRATION EFFORTS AND ACTION PLAN TO STRENGTHEN
INTERDEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION WHEN SEARCHING
FOR NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS WHEN A CHILD ENTERS THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM**

On July 18, 2006, your Board approved two separate, but related motions by Supervisors Knabe and Antonovich instructing the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to work with the New Directions Task Force (NDTF) to:

- Provide a report back to the Board in 45 days with a full update of its overall service integration efforts, including timelines (Knabe-Antonovich); and,
- Develop an action plan that strengthens the coordination and collaboration of the departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Mental Health (DMH), Health Services (DHS), Public Social Services (DPSS), and Child Support Services (CSSD), in searching for non-custodial parents at the point of entry of a child in the foster care system. (Antonovich-Knabe).

The motions were made in response to a highly publicized case in which the DCFS recently located the parent of a foster child that had been making child support payments through CSSD for a number of years.

In our September 1, 2006 memorandum to your Board, we reported that CAO staff had met with representatives from DCFS and CSSD to obtain a synopsis of non CAO-NDTF related efforts that had been taken in response to your Board's directives. We also reported that CAO staff had contacted the remaining NDTF directors to inform them of our intention to combine the response to the two motions into a single comprehensive report for your Board's consideration. The report will consist of an inventory of all NDTF service integration initiatives, as well as a plan of action for enhancing the coordination and collaboration of departments when searching for non-custodial parents at the point when a child enters the foster care system.

Since our last status report to your Board the following has transpired:

1. The Office of Independent Review submitted to your Board their Interim Report Regarding the Melinda P. Investigation, dated October 16, 2006.
2. DCFS and CSSD continue to make steady progress toward developing and piloting several elements of a plan for enhancing collaboration and coordination among their two departments. Progress made includes:
 - September 19, 2006, creation of a list of CSSD and DCFS geographically-based liaisons to support child welfare and child support workers in the field. Once finalized, these lists will be placed on the respective department's intranet site for easy access by staff needing assistance.
 - Efforts are underway within each department to define the specific duties of staff designated as liaisons and develop training to commensurate with their duties. Training and an assessment of post-training patterns of referral and appropriateness are expected to be completed by December 2006.
 - Selection of three pilot sites within the existing DCFS Linkages offices (Metro North, North Hollywood, and Torrance) to serve as the lead for the implementation of the new CSSD referral protocols. These offices were selected because of the overlap in the child support, child welfare, and public assistance caseloads. Linkages is a service integration program targeting families in CalWORKs and/or the child welfare system.
 - Training regarding DCFS' responsibilities and procedures was provided by DCFS, Deputy Director, Jackie Acosta to local and state child support staff at the October 2-4, 2006 Child Support Directors Association's Annual Training Conference.
 - Training concerning CSSD procedures and statutory requirements provided by CSSD staff on October 16, 2006 to the regional managers of the three pilot Linkages sites. The CSSD overview provided integral information for training DCFS staff on the determination of the "best interest" justification for not referring non-custodial parents for child support enforcement in light of reunification efforts, and on the compromise of arrears program for eliminating arrearages for non-custodial parents reunited with their children. Concrete information concerning the financial impact of child support on families proved beneficial to the DCFS managers. This practical information on support cost determinations was previously not known to DCFS staff. Also discussed was the impact of visitation, adoption, and the termination of parental rights on the child support obligation and other areas of intervention by CSSD in the DCFS case management process.

- CSSD has offered to increase the number of DCFS staff persons that have access to CSSD's child support case management system [ACES Replacement System (ARS)]. CSSD will expand access to the 18 regional offices of DCFS. One DCFS employee, located at the Edleman Children's Court, currently has ARS access. On September 29, 2006, DCFS issued an FYI to all staff notifying staff that Parent Locator clerks, previously outstationed at CSSD's Commerce campus, are now housed at Edmund Edelman Children's Court and provided updated procedures on how to obtain extensive search results.
- DCFS and CSSD are planning to stage a "Blue Ribbon Summit" for 300-400 joint staff to develop best practices for communication and/or referrals between the departments.
- The two departments have been working with the State to better understand how the regulations/policies and best practices of child support/child welfare agencies in other counties, e.g., Orange and San Diego, may be applied to Los Angeles County.
- DCFS and CSSD have also been working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families to explore best practices of other jurisdictions, e.g., Milwaukee, New Jersey, and Minnesota, and explore additional strategies to enhance collaboration between child welfare and child support.
- DCFS is refining its criteria for determination of the "best interest of the child" justification for not referring non-custodial parents for child support enforcement when referral would create a barrier to reunification efforts.
- CSSD and DCFS will convene a workgroup consisting of administrative and technology staff from each department to review the existing tracking system of Child Welfare System/Case Management System and ARS for solutions to technical issues and possible system incompatibilities. The departments are examining the information exchanged through electronic interface and the manner in which the information is and can be used by each department to locate parents, establish orders, and terminate support upon changes in circumstances.
- Departments have begun exploring other possible avenues in the DCFS case process that CSSD may be able to intervene, such as: Family Finders, Team Decision Making, Adoption, and Visitation.
- CSSD, Director, Philip Browning met with Edelman Children's Court judges Nash and Henry to revisit the issues of co-locating CSSD staff at the courthouse and developing a collaboration plan with the courts to improve the delivery of services to the court by CSSD.
- Measures are underway to ensure that the additional departments mentioned in your Board's instruction (DHS, DMH, and DPSS) are included within current efforts, as appropriate; as well as in the development of the action plan to enhance interdepartmental coordination and collaboration to search for non-custodial parents when a child enters the foster care system.

3. Development of a comprehensive inventory of key service integration initiatives for all 17 NDTF health and human service departments and related agencies is currently underway. Initiatives include those contained in all goals of the County's Strategic Plan and not just Goal 5: Children and Families Well-Being, for which NDTF oversees implementation. Elements being captured describe the target population, desired outcomes, partners (County departments, cities, and other community stakeholders/institutions), funding sources, implementation timeline/status, and lead department's point of contact information. To date approximately 90 initiatives have been captured with over 80 percent of NDTF departments responding

Although much progress has been and continues to be made, additional time is needed to complete the development of a multi-departmental action plan and finalize the inventory of service integration initiatives required to prepare a comprehensive report for your Board's consideration. We plan to submit a final report to your Board by December 15, 2006.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me, or your staff may contact Lari Sheehan of my staff at (213) 893-2477, or lsheehan@cao.lacounty.gov.

DEJ:LS
CP:os

- c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
New Directions Task Force Members
Office of Independent Review